DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 111 CS 215 260

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TITLE Reporting to Parents (A Classroom Newspaper).
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Writing; *Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; *Elementary School Students; Grade 6; Integrated Curriculum; Intermediate Grades; Learning Activities; Learning Experience; *School Newspapers; *Student Publications; Teaching Methods; *Writing Across the Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS Student Led Activities

ABSTRACT

After completing a unit of study entitled "Reading the Daily Newspaper" under the leadership of a teaching team consisting of student teachers and cooperating teachers, sixth-grade pupils wrote a newspaper for their parents describing their experiences in different curriculum areas in the classroom. Guided by the teaching team, student committees were formed to record units studied and learning opportunities pursued for language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics. Final copy was typed using the word processor, then copied and taken home to parents on Fridays. Parent feedback showed appreciation in reading what pupils were doing in these classes. Among pupils' suggestions for improvements were: rotations for committee members, giving equal participation opportunities; rotation of curriculum news, focusing on two subjects per issue; and the eventual inclusion of music, art, and physical education in the news topics. Pupils actively engaged in working on the classroom newspaper showed interest, purpose, meaning, and goal centered behavior. A truly integrated curriculum was stressed in language arts across the curriculum in developing and writing the classroom newspaper. (CR)

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REPORTING TO PARENTS
(A Classroom Newspaper)

ED 393 111

I supervise student teachers and cooperating teachers in the school setting. An outstanding unit was taught by both working as a team. The unit of study was entitled, "Reading the Daily Newspaper." Sixth grade pupils with the leadership of the teaching team had studied the different parts of several daily newspapers to make comparisons and contrasts. Pupils asked if they could write a newspaper of what was experienced in different curriculum areas in the classroom. They especially wished to let their parents know what was being studied and what kinds of learning activities were being pursued.

From the unit "Reading the Daily Newspaper," pupils had learned to write for a target audience so they wanted to write to their parents in newspaper format. Large group instruction involved collaboration on the part of pupils. Thus the class as a whole on Friday morning brainstormed what the class had accomplished during the week. The following experiences were finally decided upon through consensus for the classroom newspaper.

The language arts. On Monday, we read and discussed a part of Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson. We learned about the major characters in the story as well as the setting. Comparisons were made of these characters. The likenesses and differences were recorded on the overhead. The setting was contrasted with the setting experienced by pupils in every day life. Each pupil in class received a photocopy of these comparisons and contrasts after using the word processor and printer. In this way pupils had background information to use for the next school day. The photocopy made it easier for pupils to build on what had been learned in order to complete reading Treasure Island.

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Pupils suggested that committees be formed to write up what was done for the rest of the week in language arts. There was agreement on this. Problem solving by pupils was certainly in evidence here in that pupils were eager to take the classroom newspaper home to show

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parents what was being learned. So far, Monday and a part of Tuesday had been discussed and finalized. With a block of time in an interdisciplinary curriculum, learners were highly motivated to continue working on the classroom newspaper. Separate committees of five pupils for each of these days of the week worked on completing the language arts sections for the rest of the school week, Tuesday through Friday. From the cooperative learning endeavor, pupils wrote activities such as the following for the language arts that were completed during the school week: dramatizing what had been learned, writing a summary of the plot using the word processor, studying and reporting on the life and times of Robert Louis Stevenson, drawing a mural of the setting, looking for metaphors and similes in Treasure Island, reporting to the class on another book written by the same author, making a movie set on scenes from the story, and viewing/discussing a videotape on Treasure Island.

Each committee developed printouts of their part part of the classroom newspaper for the language arts and handed it to other committee members for evaluation. I believe the motivation was truly high when pupils engaged in these kinds of learning opportunities. With discussion, the class as a whole agreed upon what should go into the classroom newspaper for language arts. The final copy was typed using the word processor and printer. The photocopier was used to secure a newspaper copy for parents of pupils in the classroom. These were taken home on Friday after school.

There was considerable feedback by Monday morning from parents and pupils pertaining to the classroom newspaper. Three parents had called by phone and complimented the teaching team and pupils for getting a classroom newspaper to parents. They wanted information on what pupils were studying in the other classes in the curriculum. Five pupils mentioned that their parents desired to have a report on what was being studied in social studies, science, and mathematics. Two pupils stated that their parents wanted similar information on what was being taught in art, music, and physical.

Five pupils with the assistance of the teaching team decided to work on reporting what was being stressed in social studies during the

week. These pupils kept a diary and wrote log entries involving units studied and learning opportunities being pursued.

The ongoing unit entitled "The Middle East" consisted of learning opportunities such as the following for the ensuing week:

1. a resource person brought objects and items from the Middle East for pupils to observe and discuss.
2. learners read trade books and gave brief reports to pupils in the classroom.
3. pupils in a cooperative learning endeavor made a relief map of the Middle East.
4. the class, as a whole, read and discussed content from two basal series involving content on the Middle East.
5. each pupil wrote journal entries on subject matter acquired.

Five other pupils guided by the teaching team wrote the unit title and learning opportunities being pursued in science for the entire week of school. The unit being studied was "The Changing Surface of the Earth." Pupils, in committees, collaboratively wrote up the following activities for the classroom newspaper:

1. made model volcanoes for science experiments.
2. drew illustrations and beneath each discussed processes of folding and faulting.
3. visited places near school where sheet and gulley erosion had occurred.
4. viewed and discussed a film and a videotape on old and young mountains.
5. made a classroom rock collection of sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic rock.

The committee of pupils who collaborated on the mathematics section of the classroom newspaper wrote the following activities/ experiences, among others, pertaining to the unit entitled "Finding Areas of Plane Figures in Geometry:"

1. looked at circles on buildings and in illustrations to notice

practical uses in finding the areas of a circle.

2. made circles of different sizes using construction paper. We found the area of several of these circles.

3. drew a model scene with appropriate circles in buildings and in circular drives.

4. contrasted finding areas of circles as compared to squares and rectangles.

5. found areas of circular windows and other objects having circles.

Each committee looked at and evaluated what other committees had written for news items on social studies, science, and mathematics. After the discussion, a final document was typed using the word processor. Photocopies were then made to send home to parents.

The following Monday, pupils with the teaching team discussed feedback from the classroom newspaper. The following comments were made:

1. parents wanted to hear again about what was being emphasized in the language arts. The language arts was not covered in the last classroom newspaper.

2. they were very appreciative in hearing what pupils were doing in social studies, science, and mathematics.

3. parents were interested in visiting the classroom to observe objects the resource person presented on the Middle East (social studies) and the model volcanoes made by pupils in science.

4. they would like to have a place to write questions in the newspaper with responses provided by pupils and the teaching team.

5. parents wanted to assist their children in homework assignments.

Pupils gave the following suggestions to improve in developing the classroom newspaper:

1. change off on who works on which committee so that pupils may work with different learners.

2. standards were needed in committee work so that each could participate as much as others. Evidently a few pupils had felt left out of the newspaper project.

3. music, art, and physical education should be left out for now and focus more so on language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics. After refining the methods of working on the classroom newspaper, the areas of music, art, and physical education may be included in the classroom newspaper.

4. the teaching team asked if too much time was being spent on the classroom newspaper. Pupils wanted to continue working on the newspaper and felt that less and less time would be needed for its completion as time went on. I felt the energy levels were very high for pupils in working on the classroom newspaper.

5. selected pupils believed that rotating news pertaining to language arts and the social studies for one week and then emphasize science and mathematics in the next classroom newspaper.

In Conclusion

It was good to see pupils actively engaged in working on the classroom newspaper. There was little/ no time for pupil misbehavior. Learners took much responsibility for working with other pupils in an harmonious manner. Interest, purpose, meaning, and goal centered were behaviors shown by pupils. Pupils had visions of what the classroom newspaper should do and be like for the target audience — the parents. These visions were expressed in feedback given to the class as a whole, by individual pupils and parents themselves. A truly integrated curriculum was stressed in language arts across the curriculum in developing and writing the classroom newspaper.